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South Korea: President Pak Chong-hui is moving to break the political impasse which has paralyzed the National Assembly since the June elections.

He has made clear his intention to proceed with legislative business, particularly next year's budget, hoping that this will force the opposition party to end its boycott and take its seats in the National Assembly. If the tactic fails, Pak appears prepared to press on without the opposition. He would meet statutory requirements for budgetary action by forming a pseudo opposition group composed of expellees from the ruling party.

In an effort to prepare the public to accept this course of action, the government has emphasized the intransigence of the opposition and its own reasonable action against election violators. Nevertheless, there are inherent dangers to political stability if the government follows this course. Operation of the Assembly without an opposition is likely to generate a public outcry among politically aware Koreans. Within the administration freedom from the pressures of a parliamentary opposition will encourage factional strife and political excess.

Moderate elements of the opposition, under the leadership of party president Yu Chin-o, would like to end the impasse. Yu so far has been blocked from opening talks with the administration by opposition diehards.

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NATO: Another crisis between France and NATO is brewing.

France is objecting strongly to the so-called Harmel study, a review of the future tasks of the Alliance. The study is designed to give NATO a major role in promoting East-West detente. Some NATO members fear that continuing the study along present lines may give France a pretext to leave the Alliance. Others believe that De Gaulle will leave with or without a pretext.

In the crisis that led the French to withdraw last year from the military establishment of NATO, the French attacked NATO as old-fashioned, "cold warish," unduly military, and insufficiently interested in detente. Paris now contends that NATO should limit itself to assuring Western military security rather than meddling in detente which should be handled bilaterally.

Most NATO members, particularly in northern Europe, have been under strong domestic pressure to adapt the Alliance to a more active peace-making role. These pressures will not necessarily result, however, in strong support for the Harmel study against French objections. The British have their application to the Common Market to consider and the Germans seem to feel that tranquil Franco-German relations are more important than a reorientation of NATO.

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Syria: The recent cabinet reshuffle represents another attempt by the Baathist regime to obtain broader internal support.

Nine of the 22 members are new. Four of the new ministers are pro-Nasir, and one is allied with a Baathist splinter group, the leader of which was expelled from the party a few years ago. Key Baathist figures in the previous cabinet continue in office, including the minister of communications, a known Communist.

It is doubtful that the addition of the new members heralds a Syrian shift toward the more moderate line Nasir and King Husayn advocate regarding Israel. The communique issued in early September after the Baath Party congress, where the decision to shake up the cabinet probably was made, reiterated familiar belligerent Baathist themes, such as the prohibition of Arab oil shipments to the Western powers. Since the party congress, however, Damascus has not questioned the ultimate destination of Saudi oil now being pumped through the Trans-Arabian pipeline, which crosses Syrian territory.

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